

**BELMONT-HILLSBORO**  
**NEIGHBORHOOD**  
**CONSERVATION ZONING DISTRICT**

**H A N D B O O K**  
**A N D**  
**D E S I G N**  
**G U I D E L I N E S**

## **METROPOLITAN HISTORIC ZONING COMMISSION**

Metropolitan Government of  
Nashville and Davidson County

Sunnyside in Sevier Park  
3000 Granny White Pike  
Nashville, Tennessee 37204  
862-7970 fax: 862-7974

### **BELMONT-HILLSBORO NEIGHBORHOOD DESIGN GUIDELINES**

April 2005

Boundary amended June 2007

Metropolitan Historical Commission does not discriminate on the basis of age, race, sex, color, national origin, religion, or disability in admission to, access to, or operations of its programs, services, or activities. The Metropolitan Historical Commission does not discriminate in its hiring or employment practices. The following person has been designated to handle questions, concerns, complaints, requests for accommodation, or requests for additional information regarding the Americans with Disabilities Act: Terri Johnson, Sunnyside in Sevier Park, 3000 Granny White Pike, Nashville, TN 37204 Phone: (615) 862-7970, Fax: (615) 862-7974. The following person has been designated as the Metro Title VI Coordinator to handle questions, concerns, complaints, or requests for additional information regarding Title VI of The Civil Rights Act: Michelle Lane, Department of Finance, 222 3rd Avenue North, Suite 650, Nashville, TN 37201, Phone: (615) 862-6170, Fax: (615) 862-6175. Inquiries concerning non-discrimination policies other than ADA and Title VI compliance should be forwarded to: Veronica Frazier, Department of Human Resources, 222 Third Avenue, Suite 200, Nashville TN, 37201, Phone: (615) 862-6640.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

## PART 1: INTRODUCTION

A Short History of the Belmont-Hillsboro Neighborhood.....	1
The Conservation Zoning District.....	1
What are the Design Guidelines?.....	2
Getting Approval for Your Project .....	2
Available Design Assistance .....	3

## PART 2: THE DESIGN GUIDELINES

I. PURPOSE OF THE DESIGN GUIDELINES .....	4
II. NEW CONSTRUCTION AND ADDITIONS	
Principles .....	5
Guidelines	
<i>New Construction</i> .....	8
<i>Additions</i> .....	11
III. DEMOLITION.....	12
IV. RELOCATION .....	13
VI. DEFINITIONS .....	14

## PART I: INTRODUCTION

---

Belmont-Hillsboro, like older neighborhoods in over two thousand other towns in the United States, uses neighborhood conservation zoning, a type of historic overlay zoning as a tool to protect its unique architectural character. There are quantifiable reasons for conservation zoning: it gives neighborhoods greater control over development, it can stabilize property values, it decreases the risk of investing in one's house, it promotes heritage tourism, it protects viable urban housing stock, it preserves natural resources by conserving building materials. And there are less quantifiable, but equally important, reasons for conservation zoning -- it protects our past for future generations, it nurtures a sense of community, and it provides a sense of place.

### A SHORT HISTORY OF BELMONT-HILLSBORO

In the 19th century, the area that would become Belmont-Hillsboro was part of the estates of Adelia Acklen (Belmont) and Colonel A. B. Montgomery. The oldest sections of the neighborhood were subdivided in 1890 and 1891. In 1901, the Belmont Land Company secured a franchise to operate a street railway line along Belmont Boulevard, accelerating the development of the area as a "street car suburb". Development would continue for several decades, with some of the more southerly portions of the neighborhood developed about 1940.

Changes in tastes over this span of time resulted in recognizable changes in architectural styles. The mix of bungalows, cottages, American foursquares and tudors are common, though you will find examples of the prairie, eclectic revival and more contemporary styles as well. The neighborhood became the home of a large middle-class population, reflecting the average American lifestyle from 1890 to 1940.

Following World War II, the neighborhood suffered a decline common to many older neighborhoods as cars replaced the street cars and the suburbs of Nashville continued an outward march. Declining property values, division of what had been single-family homes into multiple rental units, and lack of building maintenance presented the neighborhood with many problems.

Beginning in the 1970s, residents and new arrivals came to recognize the value of classic homes in close proximity to urban features such as 3 universities, parks, hospitals, shopping facilities and major transportation corridors. A large portion of the neighborhood is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

In the 21st century, the housing of the neighborhood exhibits a variety of architectural styles as well as a mix of house sizes, thereby suiting a range of families and lifestyles. The process of home renovation and restoration continues today, helping the area become a very desirable Nashville address.

### THE NEIGHBORHOOD CONSERVATION ZONING DISTRICT

The boundaries of the Conservation Zoning District are shown on the map on page 4. Conservation zoning districts are **locally** designated and administered by the Metropolitan Historic Zoning Commission (MHZC), an agency of the Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County. Conservation zoning is a type of overlay zoning, applying in addition to the base or land-use zoning of an area; *conservation zoning does not impact use*. [This type of local designation is different from the National Register of Historic Places, which is a federal designation.](#)

Like the National Register, conservation zoning honors an area's historical significance, but with that recognition, certain exterior work on buildings -- new construction, additions, demolition, and relocation -- is reviewed to ensure that the neighborhood's special character is preserved.

Some other neighborhoods in Nashville have historic preservation zoning. In addition to the projects reviewed in a conservation zoning district, historic zoning addresses exterior alterations to existing buildings -- like replacing siding or installing a fence. Districts with historic zoning are not more historically significant than those with conservation zoning; it has just been a matter of determining which type of zoning is most compatible with the goals for a particular neighborhood.

## WHAT ARE THE DESIGN GUIDELINES?

The Metropolitan Historic Zoning Commission (MHZC) is the architectural review board that reviews applications for work on properties within the zoning overlay districts. Its nine members, appointed by the mayor, include representatives from zoning districts, the Metropolitan Planning Commission, the Metropolitan Historical Commission, architect(s) and others. Design review is administered according to a set of design guidelines. The guidelines are criteria and standards, developed jointly by the MHZC and the [Belmont-Hillsboro](#) Neighborhood Association, which are used in determining the architectural compatibility of proposed projects. The guidelines provide direction for project applicants and ensure that the decisions of the MHZC are not arbitrary or based on anyone's personal taste. The guidelines protect the neighborhood from new construction or additions not in character with the neighborhood and from the loss of architecturally or historically important buildings.

By state and local legislation, design guidelines for conservation zoning districts must be in accordance with the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties* -- criteria developed by the National Park Service and used by private and public preservation organizations throughout the country.

## GETTING APPROVAL FOR YOUR PROJECT

If you are planning to

- **BUILD** a new structure,
- **ADD** to an existing building ([increase the footprint, height or building envelope when visible from a street](#)),
- **DEMOLISH** a structure in whole or in part, or
- **RELOCATE** a structure,

one step is added to getting approval for the work: **you must first obtain a Preservation Permit from the MHZC.**

- I. Call the MHZC at 862-7970 to confirm whether or not the MHZC needs to review your project; and if so, to make an appointment to meet with the staff.

The staff will meet with you, your contractor or architect at your house to discuss the project, answer any questions, and advise you on whether the plans meet the design guidelines. The staff can assist in making your plans meet the guidelines and can offer design suggestions.

In order for the MHZC to determine whether a proposed project complies with the design guidelines, all applications must be accompanied by complete site plans, elevation drawings, specifications and any other appropriate information. When you submit these materials, the staff will determine whether a Preservation Permit can be issued immediately or if the work requires referral to the full Commission.

Regular meetings of the Commission are scheduled for the third Wednesday of every month. If a complete application is received more than fifteen working days prior to a scheduled meeting, a special meeting can be called. The MHZC staff will issue a Preservation Permit upon approval of the application by the Commission.

2. Take the Preservation Permit to the Metropolitan Department of Codes Administration.

Officials at Codes will review your plans for compliance with regular zoning and building code regulations -- applicable whether or not your property is in a conservation zoning district. Permit fees (amount charged depends on the type and value of the work done) will be charged to you then. Codes is located on the second floor in the rear section of the Metro Howard Office Building, 700 2nd Avenue South. For permits to remain valid, work must begin within six months of the date of issue.

***NOTE: Subject work done without a preservation permit is in violation of the Historic Zoning Regulations established under Chapter 17.36, Historic District and Landmarks, of the Code of Laws of the Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County. Like the Building Code, the Belmont-Hillsboro Design Guidelines are a legal document. Work done without prior review and approval by the MHZC is subject to fines and other penalties. Appeals to decisions of the Historic Zoning Commission staff can be made to the Commission; appeals to decisions of the Commission can be taken to a court of competent jurisdiction as provided for by law.***

## **AVAILABLE DESIGN ASSISTANCE**

The MHZC staff often meets a property owner on site to discuss a restoration project, maintenance problem, historically appropriate paint color ([paint colors are not regulated](#)) or other issue not necessarily reviewed under conservation zoning. We have a library of materials on historic architecture and restoration technology, and files on preservation products and services, which are available to the public. Call for more information.

## PART 2: THE DESIGN GUIDELINES

---

*Italicized sections of the guidelines contain interpretive information that is meant to make the guidelines easier to understand; they are not part of the guidelines themselves. Illustrations are intended only to provide example buildings and circumstances. It is important to remember that every building is different and what may be appropriate for one house may not be appropriate for another.*

### I. PURPOSE OF THE DESIGN GUIDELINES

---

- A. Design guidelines are criteria and standards which the Metropolitan Historic Zoning Commission must consider in determining the appropriateness of proposed work within a conservation zoning district. Appropriateness of work must be determined in order to accomplish the goals of historic and conservation zoning, as outlined in Article IX (Historic Zoning Regulations), Metropolitan Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance:
1. To preserve and protect the historical and/or architectural value of buildings or other structures;
  2. [In the case of new construction or additions](#), to regulate exterior design, arrangement, texture, and materials proposed to be used within the [conservation](#) district to ensure compatibility;
  3. To create an aesthetic appearance which complements the historic buildings or other structures;
  4. To foster civic beauty;
  5. To strengthen the local economy; and
  6. To promote the use of [conservation](#) districts for the education, pleasure, and welfare of the present and future citizens of Nashville and Davidson County.

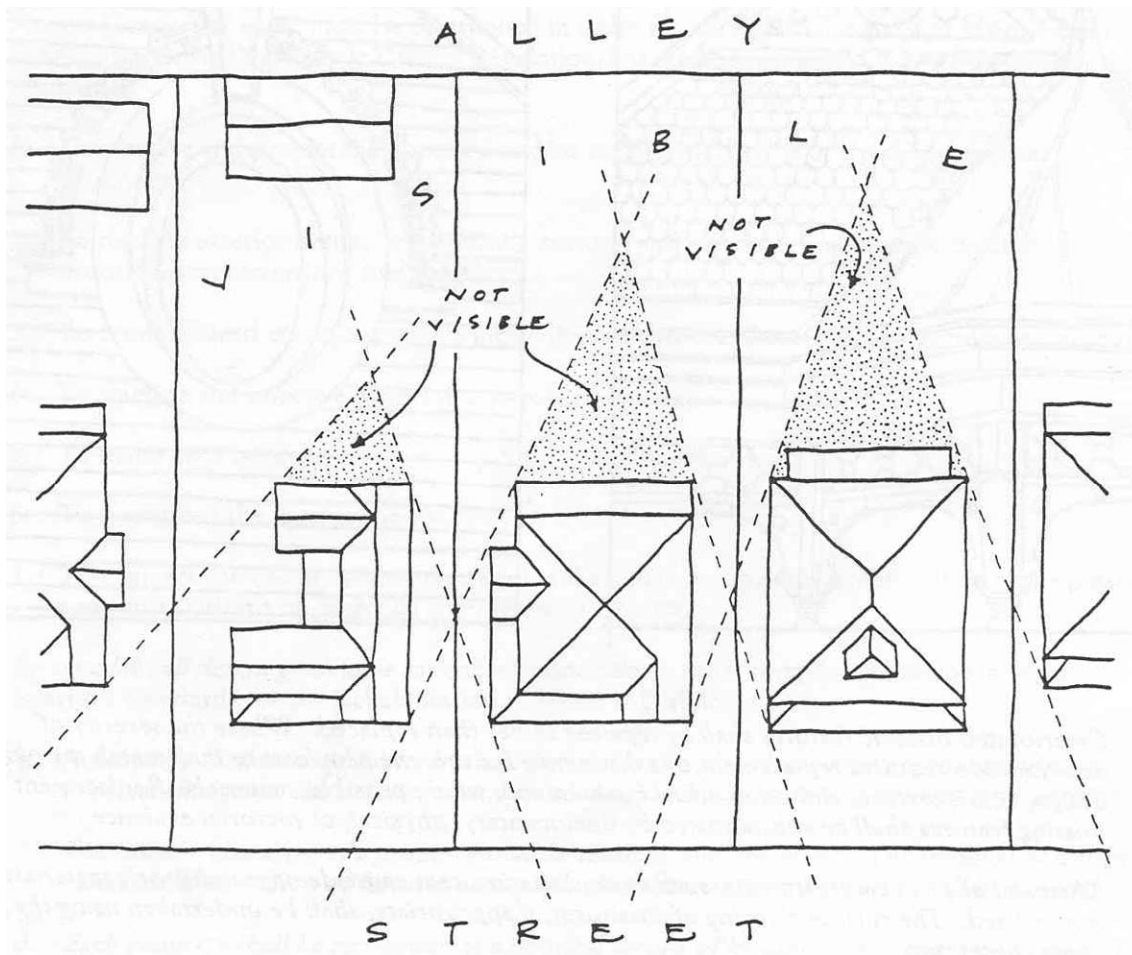
## II. NEW CONSTRUCTION AND ADDITIONS

---

### A. PRINCIPLES

1. These guidelines shall apply only to the exteriors of buildings and to portions of proposed structures that would be visible from public rights-of-way or streets.

*For the purposes of conservation zoning, alleys are not considered to be public rights-of-way. New, portable storage buildings under 100 square feet in area are not required to comply with the design guidelines.*



2. The public facades -- front- and street-related sides -- of proposals for new buildings shall be more carefully reviewed than other facades.
3. New buildings should not imitate past architectural styles; they should reflect the era of their own construction through the use of modern materials. For an exception to this principle, see number 4.

*This principle precludes the "theme park effect." Fake old buildings are not appropriate. New buildings inspired by historic styles, but identifiable as new construction, can be appropriate..*



## II. NEW CONSTRUCTION AND ADDITIONS

### A. PRINCIPLES *continued*

---

4. Reconstruction may be appropriate when it accurately reproduces a no-longer existing building on its original site, if the building: (1) would have contributed to the historic and architectural character of the area; (2) will be compatible in terms of style, height, scale, massing, and materials with the buildings immediately surrounding it; and (3) is accurately based on documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.
5. Continuous construction in [Belmont-Hillsboro](#) neighborhood during the early 20th century resulted in a variety of building types and styles that illustrate the evolution of architectural styles and technology over the years. New buildings should continue this tradition while complementing and being visually compatible with surrounding historic buildings.



EARLY 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY  
COMMERCIAL BUILDING



BUNGALOW

## II. NEW CONSTRUCTION AND ADDITIONS

### A. PRINCIPLES continued

---



6. New construction should respect, and not disrupt, the established pattern and rhythm of existing historic buildings on the same and opposite sides of a street.

## II. NEW CONSTRUCTION AND ADDITIONS

### B. GUIDELINES

---

#### I. New Construction

---

See Illustration on page 10

##### a. Height

The height of the foundation wall, porch roof(s), and main roof(s) of a new building shall be compatible, by not contrasting greatly, with those of surrounding historic buildings.

##### b. Scale

The size of a new building and its mass in relation to open spaces shall be compatible, by not contrasting greatly, with surrounding historic buildings.

##### c. Setback and Rhythm of Spacing

The setback from front and side yard property lines established by adjacent historic buildings should be maintained. Generally, a dominant rhythm along a street is established by uniform lot and building width. Infill buildings should maintain that rhythm. MHZC does not review the painting of structures.

##### d. Materials, Texture, and Details, and Material Color

The materials, texture, and details, and material color of a new building's public facades shall be visually compatible, by not contrasting greatly, with surrounding historic buildings. Vinyl and aluminum siding are not appropriate. MHZC does not review the painting of structures.

*T-I-I-I-type building panels, "permastone", E.I.F.S., and other artificial siding materials are generally not appropriate. However, cement fiberboard siding is an approvable siding material for new construction, but it should be smooth and not stamped or embossed to emulate wood grain.*

##### e. Roofs

The roof(s) of a new building shall be visually compatible, by not contrasting greatly, with the roof shape, orientation, and pitch of surrounding historic buildings. **With the exception of chimneys, roof-top equipment and roof penetrations shall be located so as to minimize their visibility from the street.**

##### f. Orientation

The orientation of a new building's front facade shall be visually consistent with surrounding historic buildings.

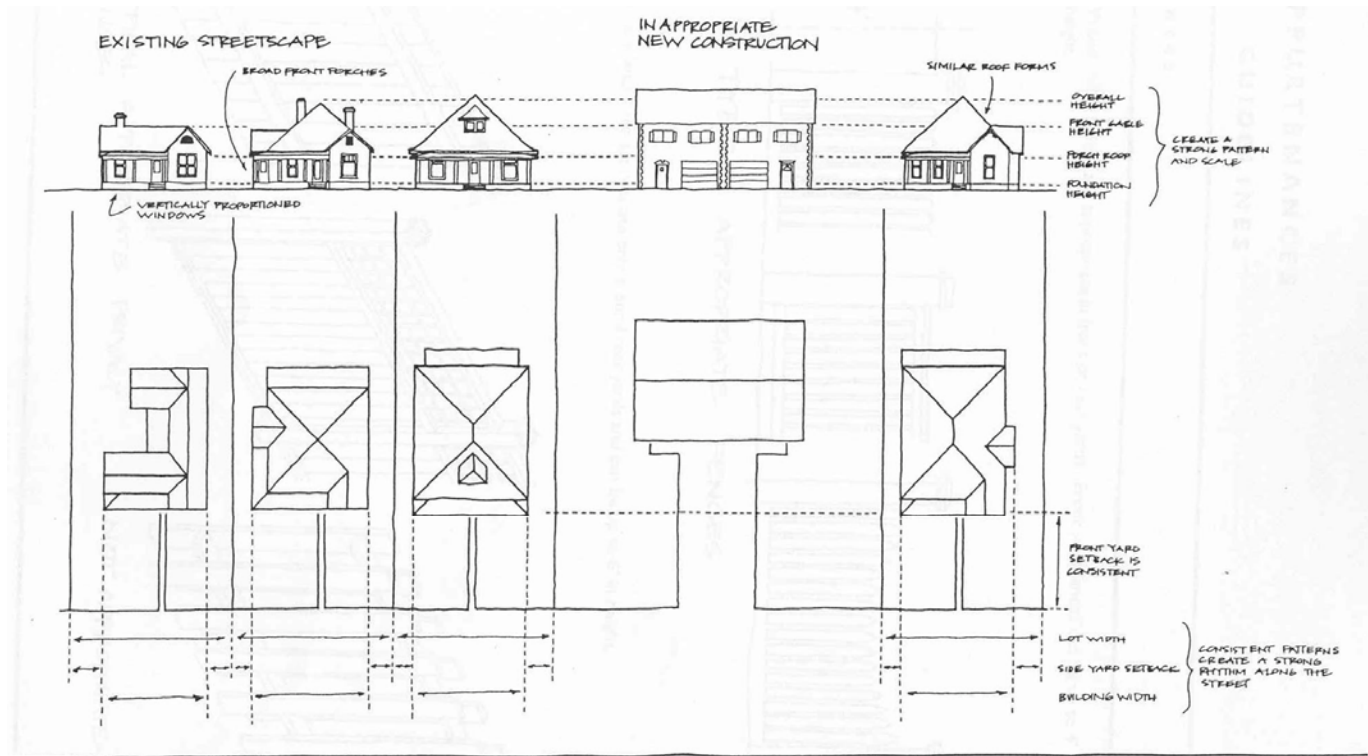
##### g. Proportion and Rhythm of Openings

The relationship of width to height of windows and doors, and the rhythm of solids (walls) to voids (door and window openings) in a new building shall be compatible, by not contrasting greatly, with surrounding historic buildings.

## II. NEW CONSTRUCTION AND ADDITIONS

### B. GUIDELINES

#### 1. *New Construction continued*



## II. NEW CONSTRUCTION AND ADDITIONS

### B. GUIDELINES Continued

#### I. New Construction continued

##### g. Proportion and Rhythm of Openings

The relationship of width to height of windows and doors, and the rhythm of solids (walls) to voids (door and window openings) in a new building shall be compatible, by not contrasting greatly, with surrounding historic buildings.

##### h. Utilities

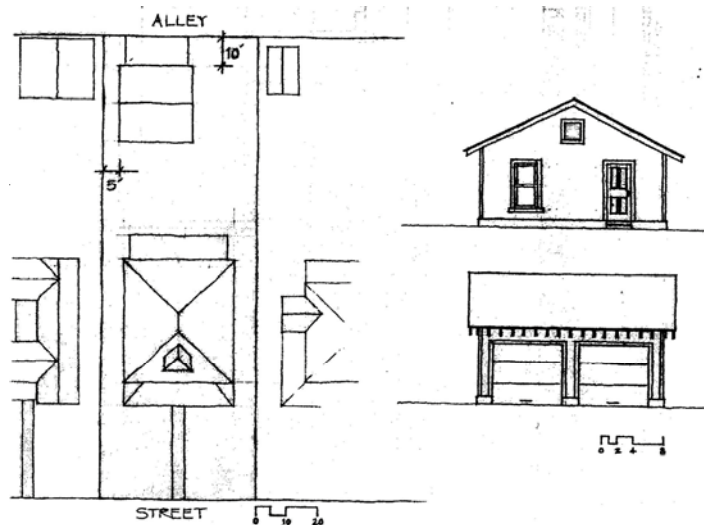
Utility connections such as gas meters, electric meters, phone, cable, and HVAC condenser units should be located so as to minimize their visibility from the street.

##### i. Outbuildings

- 1) A new garage or storage building should reflect the character of the period of the house to which the outbuilding will be related. The outbuilding should be compatible, by not contrasting greatly, with surrounding historic outbuildings in terms of height, scale, roof shape, materials, texture, and details.

*Historically, outbuildings were either very utilitarian in character, or (particularly with more extravagant houses) they repeated the roof forms and architectural details of the houses to which they related. Generally, either approach is appropriate for new outbuildings. Brick, weatherboard, and board - and -batten are typical siding materials. Outbuildings with weatherboard siding typically have wide cornerboards and window and door casings (trim). Generally, the minimum roof pitch appropriate for outbuildings is 12:4. Decorative raised panels on publicly visible garage doors are generally not appropriate. Publicly visible pedestrian doors must either be appropriate for the style of house to which the outbuilding relates or be flat with no panels. Publicly visible windows should be appropriate to the style of the house.*

- 2) Outbuildings should be situated on a lot as is historically typical for surrounding historic buildings.



## II. NEW CONSTRUCTION AND ADDITIONS

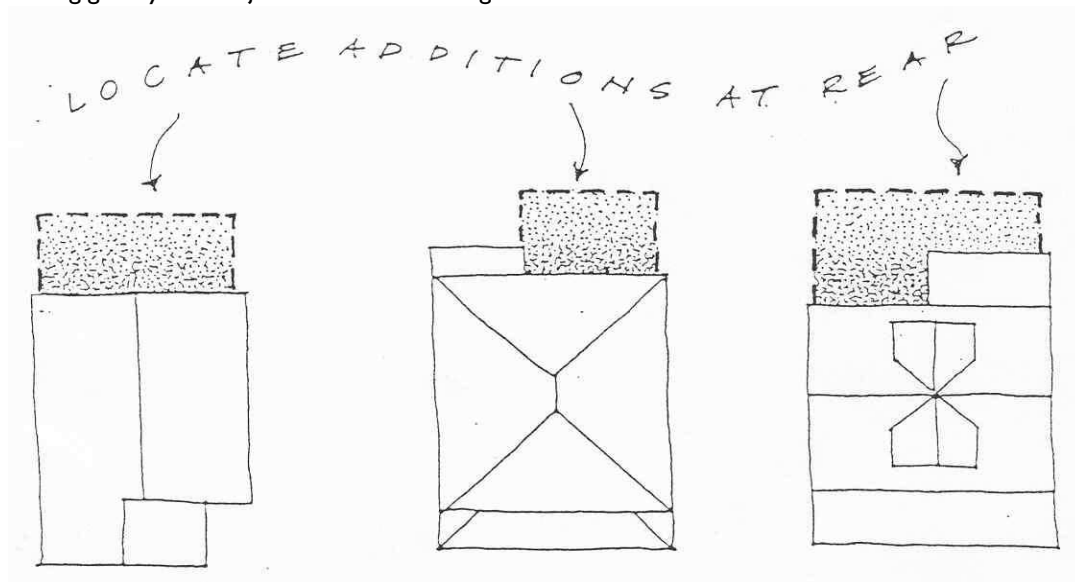
### B. GUIDELINES Continued

---

#### 2. Additions

---

- a. Generally, an addition should be situated at the rear of a building in such a way that it will not disturb either front or side facades. To distinguish between the historic structure and an addition, it is desirable to set the addition in from the building side wall or for the addition to have a different exterior cladding. Additions not normally recommended on historic structures may be appropriate for non-historic structures. Front or side alterations to non-historic structures that increase space or change exterior height should be compatible by not contrasting greatly with adjacent historic buildings.



- b. When a lot width exceeds 60 feet or the standard lot width on the block, it may be appropriate to add a side addition to a historic structure. The addition should set back from the face of the historic structure and should be subservient in height, width and massing to the historic structure.
- c. The creation of an addition through enclosure of a front porch is not appropriate. The creation of an addition through the enclosure of a side porch may be appropriate if the addition is constructed in such a way that the original form and openings on the porch remain visible and undisturbed.
- d. Contemporary designs for additions to existing properties are not discouraged when such additions do not destroy significant historical, architectural, or cultural material; and when such design is compatible, by not contrasting greatly, with the size, scale, material color, material, and character of the property, neighborhood, or environment.
- e. A new addition should be constructed in such a manner that if the addition were to be removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the original structure would be unimpaired.
- f. Additions should follow the guidelines for new construction.

### III. DEMOLITION

---

#### A. PRINCIPLE

The demolition of a building, or major portion of a building, which contributes historically or architecturally to the character and significance of the district is not appropriate and should be avoided.

#### B. GUIDELINES

---

##### 1. *Demolition is not appropriate*

---

- a. if a building, or major portion of a building, is of such architectural or historical interest and value that its removal would be detrimental to the public interest; or
  - b. if a building, or major portion of a building, is of such old or unusual or uncommon design and materials that it could not be reproduced or be reproduced without great difficulty and expense.
- 

##### 2. *Demolition is appropriate*

---

- a. if a building, or major portion of a building, has irretrievably lost its architectural and historical integrity and significance and its removal will result in a more historically appropriate visual effect on the district;
  - b. if a building, or major portion of a building, does not contribute to the historical and architectural character and significance of the district and its removal will result in a more historically appropriate visual effect on the district; or
  - c. if the denial of the demolition will result in an economic hardship on the applicant as determined by the MHZC in accordance with section 91.65 of the historic zoning ordinance.
-

## **IV. RELOCATION**

---

### **A. PRINCIPLES**

1. Moving a historic building from its original site should be avoided.
2. Moving a non-historic building, or a building which has irretrievably lost its architectural and historical integrity, may be appropriate.

### **B. GUIDELINES**

1. Moving a building into the district is appropriate if the building will be compatible with the historic buildings surrounding the new location in terms of height, scale, setback and rhythm of spacing, materials, texture, details, material color, roof shape, orientation, and proportion and rhythm of openings.
2. Moving a building out of the district is not appropriate unless:
  - a. the building does not contribute to the district's historical and architectural significance, or has irretrievably lost its architectural and historical integrity; or
  - b. the building is historic, but the loss of its architectural and historical integrity in its original location is certain.
3. Moving a building from one location to another within the district is not appropriate unless:
  - a. the building will be compatible with the historic buildings surrounding the new location in terms of height, scale, setback and rhythm of spacing, materials, texture, details, material color, roof shape, orientation, and proportion and rhythm of openings; and
  - b. if historic, the loss of its architectural and historical integrity in its original location is certain.



## VI. DEFINITIONS

---

**Addition:** New construction that increases the footprint, height, or building envelope of an existing structure.

**Appropriate:** Suitable for, or compatible with, a property or district, based on accepted standard and techniques for historic preservation.

**Certificate of Appropriateness:** See Preservation Permit.

**Demolition:** The tearing down of a building in whole or in part.

**Elevation:** A scaled drawing that illustrates the view of a side of a building.

**Facade:** An exterior side of a building.

**Historic:** A structure or site, usually over fifty years old, which possesses historical or architectural significance, based on the criteria for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

**New Construction:** Any freestanding structure on a lot constructed after the designation of the conservation zoning district.

**Non-Historic:** A structure or site, usually less than fifty years old, which does not possess historical or architectural significance, based on the criteria for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

**Orientation:** The directional expression of the front facade of a building, i.e., facing the street, facing north.

**Parking Pad:** A paved area that may be used for the storage or parking of motor vehicles and not as a vehicular drive to access a garage, carport or parking pad.

**Preservation Permit:** A legal document issued by the Metropolitan Historic Zoning Commission confirming review and approval of work to be done on property within the boundaries of an historic or conservation zoning district. A preservation permit is required before getting a building permit. Previously called Certificate of Appropriateness.

**Public Right of Way:** Publicly owned and maintained streets and walkways. For the purposes of conservation zoning, alleys are not considered public rights-of-way.

**Reconstruction:** Construction of an accurate replica of a historic building or portion thereof, based on physical, pictorial or documentary evidence.

**Relocation:** The moving of a building from one site to another.

**Shall:** What must happen.

**Should:** What must happen unless circumstances illustrate why an alternative is more appropriate.